

AMENDED IN SENATE AUGUST 2, 2010

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MAY 28, 2010

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 15, 2010

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2009–10 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2342

Introduced by Assembly Member Evans

February 19, 2010

An act to add Section 16523 to the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to foster youth.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2342, as amended, Evans. Foster youth: outreach programs.

Existing law provides for child welfare services, which are public social services directed toward, among other purposes, protecting and promoting the welfare of all children, including those in foster care placement.

Existing law requires the Office of the State Foster Care Ombudsperson to be established in the State Department of Social Services with prescribed powers and duties relating to the management of foster children, including the dissemination of information on the rights of children and youth in foster care and the services provided by the office.

This bill would require the office, in consultation with relevant state departments, the Administrative Office of the Courts, and foster youth stakeholders, to develop a resource guide for ~~adolescent~~ *emancipating* foster youth that outlines available statewide programs and services, and the eligibility standards for those programs and services, as specified. This bill would require the office to incorporate the resource

guide into its existing Internet Web site and print publications. ~~This bill would make the development and distribution of the resource guide contingent upon the office seeking and receiving public and private grants for that purpose.~~

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 *SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the*
2 *following:*

3 *(a) California has the highest number of foster youth of any*
4 *state in the nation, with approximately 84,000 youth in foster care*
5 *and over 4,500 youth emancipating from the system every year.*

6 *(b) Foster youth transitioning out of foster care, most often than*
7 *not, leave the system without any real preparation, family support,*
8 *or education, to achieve gainful employment. Without a network*
9 *of support to guide them into a successful adulthood, foster youth*
10 *preparing to leave foster care face greater challenges and*
11 *obstacles to independence.*

12 *(c) In the California Youth Connection 2009 Summer Leadership*
13 *and Policy Conference Report, foster youth reported that they are*
14 *not prepared for the often daunting transition from foster care to*
15 *adulthood. Foster youth in foster homes, long-term foster homes,*
16 *or other out-of-home placements found that when the juvenile*
17 *dependency court terminates jurisdiction of their case, they are*
18 *not prepared for the realities of adulthood. According to a report*
19 *released in 2010 by the Public Policy Institute of California, titled*
20 *“Foster Care in California Achievements and Challenges,” many*
21 *children who emancipate lack strong connections to a network of*
22 *supportive adults. For instance, well over half (64 percent) of*
23 *children who emancipated in 2008 and 2009 lived last with*
24 *someone who was neither a relative or a guardian. Only one in*
25 *five (21 percent) was last placed with a relative at the exit time of*
26 *from the foster system. An additional 16 percent were placed with*
27 *a guardian not related to them.*

28 *(d) According to the studies of California’s former foster youth,*
29 *within 18 months of emancipation, 40 to 50 percent become*
30 *homeless, 65 percent need immediate housing; 46 percent complete*
31 *high school, compared to 84 percent of the general population,*

1 50 percent experience high rates of unemployment within five years
2 of emancipation, 33 percent have incomes at, or below, \$6,000
3 per year, which is substantially below the federal poverty level of
4 \$7,890 for a single individual and 33 percent have no form of
5 health insurance. Moreover youth transitioning from foster care
6 have disproportionately high rates of physical, developmental,
7 and mental health problems, and foster youth with multiple
8 placements are five to 10 times more likely to become involved
9 with the juvenile justice system than youth in the general
10 population.

11 (e) When transitioning from foster care into independent living,
12 most foster youth are unaware of the programs and services
13 available to them in their own community and do not know where
14 to find help or whom to ask for help.

15 (f) In “A Summary of Foster Youth Recommendations from
16 California Youth Connection Conferences,” a report released in
17 2006, foster youth reported that emancipation services are not
18 plentiful and often unheard of by youth in foster care, partly
19 because they do not exist in many counties. Many youth are
20 unaware of any services offered to emancipated youth.

21 (g) There are many local, state, public, and nonprofit
22 organizations in California that have developed their own version
23 of a resource guide for foster youth, however, these resource guides
24 usually include information specific to a local government, county,
25 or organization, or are not developed specifically to include
26 information on programs and services for foster youth.

27 (h) Developing and distributing a resource guide that includes
28 information on available statewide programs and services will
29 provide emancipating foster youth with a valuable tool that they
30 can use to navigate a complex, and sometimes intimidating, system
31 of public agencies and organizations.

32 (i) Connecting transitioning youth with information on existing
33 programs and services available to them will increase their
34 opportunities for experiencing a successful transition into
35 independence.

36 **SECTION 1.**

37 SEC. 2. Section 16523 is added to the Welfare and Institutions
38 Code, to read:

39 16523. (a) The Office of the State Foster Care Ombudsperson
40 shall develop a resource guide for ~~adolescent~~ emancipating foster

1 youth that outlines available statewide programs and services, and
2 the eligibility standards for those programs and services. The
3 programs and services included in the resource guide shall include,
4 but not be limited to, those associated with education, ~~health,~~
5 ~~housing, mental health services, independent living programs,~~
6 ~~personal finance, and career and job opportunities.~~ *including*
7 *preparing for and assessing postsecondary or vocation education*
8 *and financial aid, health and health care coverage, housing*
9 *assistance and transitional living programs, mental health services,*
10 *independent living programs, accessing and obtaining personal*
11 *identification documents, personal finance, career planning, and*
12 *job training opportunities.*

13 (b) The office shall incorporate the resource guide into its
14 existing Internet Web site and print publications.

15 (c) The office shall consult with relevant state departments, the
16 Administrative Office of the Courts, and foster youth stakeholders,
17 including, but not limited to, California Youth Connection, to
18 develop the resource guide.

19 ~~(d) The development and distribution of the resource guide shall~~
20 ~~be contingent upon the office seeking and receiving public and~~
21 ~~private grants for that purpose.~~